



House Bill 1511

Testimony of Brian Kalk, Assistant Vice President for Strategic Partnerships

University of North Dakota Energy & Environmental Research Center

House Finance and Taxation Committee

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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning House Bill 1511. My name is Brian Kalk, and I am an Assistant Vice President for Strategic Partnerships at the University of North Dakota's (UND's) Energy & Environmental Research Center (EERC).

The EERC has a long history of working closely with North Dakota's lignite coal industry for the benefit of the industry and the citizens of North Dakota. We have more than 70 years of experience providing solutions for clean, efficient coal combustion. Additionally, we have extensive research and expertise in advanced materials, including critical minerals (CMs), rare-earth elements (REEs), and high-value carbon products. These advanced materials could have diverse applications in energy technologies, lithium-ion battery materials, and consumer technologies that can greatly enhance the national security of the United States. I would like to highlight that over 99% of the REEs and CMs used by the United States today are produced from outside of our borders. Currently, the EERC is involved in numerous projects with the Department of Energy and regional companies dedicated to creating an REE and CM industry in North Dakota to provide a domestic supply of REEs and CMs. The main tasks of this work include the characterization of the resources; development and demonstration of environmentally friendly technologies; and creation of the supporting strategies for infrastructure, industries, and business. The path to establishing an REE and CM value chain is onerous, but not impossible, so early leadership is crucial to sustain North Dakota's prospective role as a leading supplier of these important materials. Risk mitigation, such as that provided by this legislation, sends a strong signal to those contemplating investment.